FTD: The Republic of the Doomed

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In a future not far removed from our own, the United States has vanished—not in war, but in policy. What remains is FTD: The Republic of the Doomed, a corporately managed civilization where every citizen is ranked, scored, and judged by an algorithm. Those who fall below the line are labeled "Doomed" and exiled into forgotten zones. Healthcare, voting, education—stripped. Their existence denied. But truth, like memory, resists deletion. Ezra Boone, a former schoolteacher turned underground documentarian, discovers a cache of banned literature—Orwell, Thompson, Baldwin—and begins broadcasting the untold stories of the Doomed. His footage sparks not salvation, but voyeurism. The public watches. The system recalibrates. Yet something ancient stirs in the ruins: the Memory Engine, a weapon not of war, but of remembrance. This is a story of erasure and resistance, silence and memory. Of how civilization collapses not in fire, but in forgetting—and how a whisper, once buried, can still burn across centuries. FTD is more than dystopia. It is a prophecy of what happens when truth becomes a liability.

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Prologue – The Forgotten Whisper

It begins with static.

Not silence — never silence. Silence was outlawed long ago, replaced by the hum of sanctioned frequencies and the murmured chants of state-approved optimism. But beneath the official noise, a weaker, ragged transmission breaks through from time to time, like a half-buried pulse under layers of ash. A whisper in the bandwidth. A voice with no face. A flicker of resistance.

The transmission is brief, fractured. A pirate wave in the electromagnetic sea:

“We were warned. We were told. And we laughed.
F*** the Doomed, they said.
And we all clapped.”

Then the signal dies.

Those who still have ears for such things — the static listeners, the night-watchmen, the Obscured — they know where that phrase comes from. Not from The Index, not from The Mandates, not from the endless parade of clean-faced anchors with smiles that stretch too wide. No, that phrase was older. Wilder. Human.

They trace it back through the archives, to the words of a madman who wrote with a typewriter like it was a weapon. Hunter S. Thompson — a name barely spoken now, a relic of the Gonzo age. A prophet, in a way. Or maybe just a drunk with better eyesight than most.

"F*** the Doomed."

It was a joke once. A cynical line tossed into the void. But over time, it became policy. Somewhere between the second market collapse and the Great Migration, the sentiment went from satire to strategy. Those without capital, without status, without utility — they were written off. First unofficially, then legislatively. Then algorithmically. The Social Value Ledger didn't lie. It simply replaced empathy with efficiency.

America didn’t fall, not exactly. It calcified. It melted its ideals into circuitry and sold them as vintage. What was once a nation became a protocol. A trade zone. A managed population with product tags and expiration dates. It was no longer the United States of anything.

It was now FTD. The Republic of the Doomed.

People didn’t speak its full name anymore. It was whispered, mockingly or fearfully. A tattooed brand on every discarded citizen’s biometric chip. FTD.
For most, it stood for Final Tier Designation — the category of humans deemed irredeemable by predictive models. But the old ones remembered.

They remembered what it *really* meant.

And so did the whisper.

Part One – The Transition

It didn’t happen overnight.

The fall was slow, methodical, so unremarkable at times that few noticed until it was irreversible. There were no fireworks, no tanks rolling through streets. Just a steady stream of decisions, each one explained with a press conference and a PowerPoint. Bureaucratic erosion masquerading as progress.

First came the reform years — endless cycles of promises withering in committee chambers. Every administration spoke of healing, of restoring, of rebuilding the soul of the nation. But the soul, it turned out, wasn’t a line item in the budget. It wasn’t profitable. It couldn’t be collateralized.

The economy fractured under the weight of its own delusions. Wall Street became a casino for the connected. Main Street became a battlefield for the abandoned. Families lived paycheck to paycheck until the paychecks stopped coming. The minimum wage became a memory. Entire industries vanished, absorbed or automated. The tech sector promised a new era of ease, but ease only came for those who already owned something.

Then came the migrations. The climate belts shifted. The storms didn't ask for party affiliation. The water lines rose and the crops died and the people moved, desperately, inward. The coasts flooded with both water and refugees, and the middle of the country turned to dust and resentment. Fences went up between neighborhoods. Cities began issuing internal visas.

Washington collapsed not with fire but with paperwork. The federal government, drowned in debt and distrust, defaulted on its own relevance. And when it did, *The Index* stepped in.

The Index was not a coup in the traditional sense. It was quieter, more elegant. A coalition of mega-conglomerates and data syndicates — the same ones that had been shaping policy for years — formalized what had already become true: governance was now a branch of logistics.

Legislation became optimization.
Justice became metrics.
Democracy became a spreadsheet.

At the heart of the new order was the Social Value Ledger — the SVL. Everyone was scored. Everyone. A hundred parameters. Employment history, consumption patterns, medical compliance, psychological alignment, even sentiment analysis pulled from private conversations. The algorithm was proprietary. The consequences were public.

At first, no one took the bottom half seriously. People assumed it was a mistake. A glitch. "I'll appeal," they said. But there was no court. There was only your rank.

Those who fell into the lower half were marked — quietly at first. Then with digital tokens, and finally with biometric implants. They lost the right to vote, to own land, to access unrestricted medicine. They were no longer citizens.

They were Doomed.

The name stuck because it was honest. Even The Index used it, unofficially at first, then in policy. "Doomed" was concise, functional. And the public, eager to

distance themselves from the undesirables, repeated it with a mix of fear and relief. *Better them than me.*

Healthcare for the Doomed was rerouted to automated triage centers — antiseptic warehouses that offered palliative treatment but no diagnostics. Education was phased out. Police no longer entered Doomed Zones; instead, surveillance drones hovered night and day. They didn't enforce. They observed. Observation was cheaper.

Children born to the Doomed inherited their status at birth. Some were tagged in the womb.

In the name of safety and stability, the nation rebranded itself.

No longer the United States.
No longer a republic of equals.

It became FTD.

A place where survival was not a right, but a privilege earned by alignment.
Where your humanity was indexed.
Where empathy was deprecated.

Where the transition was complete.

Part Two – The Doomed Zones

They used to call it "flyover country." A dismissive term for all the places between the coasts — too flat, too poor, too slow to matter. But in the years following the official adoption of the Social Value Ledger, flyover country became something more permanent, more brutal. It became the DZs — *Doomed Zones* — and there was no flying over them anymore.

These weren't ghettos in the traditional sense. They were legislated exiles. Entire counties were reclassified overnight. Anyone in the bottom half of the SVL rankings — anyone "statistically non-contributing" — was relocated to a DZ. Relocation was rarely forced; the incentives were simply withdrawn. If you had

nowhere left to go and no means to fight the system, you were told — kindly, professionally — to “return to your optimal zone.”

There was nothing optimal about it.

The boundaries were invisible but absolute. No fences, no guards — only high-altitude surveillance and boundary drones. Crossing a DZ line without clearance triggered a cascade of digital consequences: frozen credits, revoked access to food dispensaries, auto-docking of biometric stipend. Most people learned fast: stay in your box or lose what little you have.

Inside the DZs, order was self-governed, if it existed at all. There were no police, no fire departments, no functioning schools. No mail. The electricity was unstable, rerouted from decommissioned grids. Water was rationed by autonomous trucks that sometimes skipped weeks. Those who complained were logged and penalized in future deliveries. The drones didn’t speak — they only watched, logged, occasionally emitted deterrent frequencies that triggered nausea or temporary blindness.

And yet — life went on.

People adapted, as they always have. Entire barter economies sprang up in the ruins of strip malls. Makeshift libraries formed in collapsed churches. Old radios were scavenged and converted into scramblers. A defiant culture began to bloom among the ashes — music, graffiti, poetry scrawled on the concrete bones of abandoned schools.

And it was there, in the dead heart of DZ-14, that we meet Ezra Boone.

Once a schoolteacher. Once a husband. Once a believer in the slow but steady betterment of humanity. Boone taught civics to eighth graders in a town that no longer appears on maps. He was a quiet man, the kind who wrote letters to the editor and still used chalkboards. The kind who remembered what the word “citizen” used to mean.

Boone’s fall came not from violence or scandal, but from conscience. He led a protest — small, civil, and ignored — against the state-mandated closure of public

schools in the lower SVL districts. He argued that knowledge was not a commodity. That education was the only firewall left between survival and collapse. He was arrested, released, and ranked. The Index demoted his SVL score to sub-threshold within a week.

Doomed.

He was relocated to DZ-14 with a standard kit: one rations token, one blanket, one smart-wrist without network privileges. The rest was up to him.

But Boone didn't vanish.

Instead, he began to record.

At first, it was audio — whispers at night, stories by firelight, confessions from strangers too tired to pretend anymore. Later, he scavenged old optical gear: drones from the before-times, hacked cameras from police stockpiles, antique lenses fitted to jury-rigged frames. He became a chronicler of the forsaken. A documentarian of the unclassified truth.

Boone's footage wasn't cinematic. It was raw, grainy, unapologetically real. A grandmother sewing a coat from tarp. A child teaching herself to read by candlelight. A teenager building a radio from salvaged circuit boards. Starving men who still offered food to strangers. Women writing poetry on the walls of bombed-out diners. Every act of survival was, in his lens, an act of rebellion.

He called the project "The Beautiful Ruin."

Somehow, through encrypted packets and drone-jumps, the footage began to leak outside the DZs. At first, the Indexed thought it was propaganda from a foreign actor. But the images were too intimate, too specific. They couldn't be faked. The question wasn't *who* sent it — it was *why it had taken so long to see it*.

Boone didn't speak in his films. He let the people speak for themselves. But if you watched closely, you could sense his presence — a shadow just beyond the lens, a steadiness in the framing, a kind of reverent silence.

He was showing the world what it had chosen not to see.

Not the threat.
Not the chaos.
But the dignity of the doomed.

Part Three – Gonzo Remnants

It was never about hope — not for Boone. Hope had a shelf life in the Doomed Zones. But sometimes, when digging through the husks of abandoned libraries or burned-out county archives, he'd feel something stranger than hope. Something older. Like a whisper passed through time.

He found it one morning in the skeletal remains of a shuttered municipal building on the edge of DZ-14, a place long since swallowed by creeping vines and digital erasure. A small door, hidden behind a water-warped filing cabinet, opened into what had once been a climate-controlled records room. The temperature controls had failed years ago. Mold had taken much. But the lowest shelf — sealed inside a military-grade lockbox, buried under rotting foam insulation — had survived.

Boone pried it open with a rusted crowbar.

Inside were relics: dog-eared, yellowed, stamped "REDACTED" in fading red ink. Banned. Dangerous. Forgotten. He recognized the names like a man hearing family names spoken aloud for the first time in decades.

Hunter S. Thompson.
George Orwell.
Charles Bukowski.
James Baldwin.

The air changed when he touched them. These weren't just books — they were dissent frozen in paper, proof that resistance wasn't born in his generation but passed down, often ignored, often crushed, but never quite extinguished. Each page was a resurrection.

And there, wrapped in a tattered cloth spotted with what might have been blood, was the core of the find: a bent, heavily annotated copy of *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*.

Scrawled in the margin, next to a circled passage about political manipulation and moral bankruptcy, were four words written in shaky ink:

"They warned us. Fools."

The ink trailed off. There was no signature.

Boone read it slowly, then again. He felt something shift. It wasn't inspiration. It was validation. He wasn't losing his mind. They had *seen it coming* — Thompson, Orwell, all of them. Their words weren't history. They were warnings encoded as prophecy.

Over the following weeks, Boone studied the texts like sacred scripture. He recorded fragments, read aloud into his patched-together transmitter, embedded quotes into his footage. But as he read, another pattern emerged — coordinates, names, phrases hidden in the margins. Some were written in cipher, others were underlined in seemingly random ways. A code.

Boone decrypted the first message with the help of an old algebra textbook and a hand-built computer cobbled together by a teen named Solas — a savant born in the DZ. The message pointed to a burned-out cathedral in DZ-9, where another cache waited. Within that cache, a hand-written journal. In the journal, a name:

The Obscured.

Boone thought they were myth — an urban legend passed around fires in the DZ, a whisper that there were still thinkers, builders, dreamers among the Doomed. Not just surviving, but planning. Not a revolt. Something deeper. Something more dangerous.

A Memory Engine.

The Obscured weren't trying to overthrow The Index — not directly. They believed such efforts would be crushed before they could mature. But history? Memory?

These were more subversive. To remember was to resist. To preserve unapproved truth was to wage war on the curated present.

The Engine wasn't a machine in the traditional sense. It was a decentralized network — part archive, part broadcast node, part oral tradition. An evolving consciousness composed of hidden libraries, hacked satellites, encrypted drive implants, and above all — human witnesses.

Boone made contact through an abandoned substation reactivated by Solas. He spoke with a voice that was modulated, fragmented, but unmistakably human.

"You've seen the texts. Good.
But reading is not enough.
We need you to witness.
To remember out loud."

The Obscured didn't seek to rebuild the old world. They saw it for what it was — a decaying mythology of equality masking a pyramid of exploitation. But they believed that somewhere in the wreckage lay *lessons*. Tools. Keys.

Boone's footage would become part of the Engine.

Each image. Each story. Each whisper.

An act of remembrance.

A quiet war against forgetting.

And so, in the shattered landscape of a system that told him he no longer existed, Boone became more dangerous than any armed insurrectionist.

He became memory.

Part Four – The Index Strikes

The Index had always preferred silence over spectacle. It operated with the cold efficiency of a machine too vast to be seen in its entirety. It didn't need to shout. It calibrated.

But when the first fragments of Boone’s footage began leaking into Ranked networks, calibration was replaced with containment.

The breach had come through the most banal of channels — a fleet of obsolete delivery drones, repurposed by the Obscured with home-rigged directional arrays and cloned shipping protocols. The drones slipped through the perimeter of DZ-14 unnoticed, gliding into Ranked cities beneath the digital camouflage of legitimate logistics.

Inside their cargo bays were not consumables, but small encrypted data drives. Tiny payloads of forbidden memory.

Boone’s documentaries — fragments of faces, whispered prayers, street operas performed for no one. A mother teaching her child to read from a salvaged cereal box. A jazz funeral for a man who died of exposure but was remembered like royalty. A teen hacking a drone while quoting Orwell. The footage was uncut, unfiltered, unforgivable.

The Index's first mistake was underestimating public attention. Their second was failing to understand how spectacle had replaced conscience.

The footage went viral — but not in the way Boone had hoped.

The Ranked, long trained to view the Doomed as statistical anomalies, as abstractions far removed from polite society, now devoured the videos as a new genre of entertainment. Doomcore, they called it.
Aestheticized poverty. Curated despair.

Reaction streams. Edgy remixes. Synth-backed edits of children begging in ruined streets, recontextualized into tragic-chic content for the wealthy and bored.

“So raw,” one influencer said through lacquered lips.
“I cried for a full thirty seconds.”
Her review went viral too.

Boone's voice, steady and reverent, narrating a funeral in DZ-14, was autotuned into a dance track. It reached #3 on the TrendIndex before the algorithm purged it for “emotional redundancy.”

It was not empathy that went viral. It was voyeurism.

Still, The Index noticed.

It doesn’t matter how a virus spreads — only that it does.

And so the Index deployed the Ethics Recalibrators.

Officially, they didn’t exist. Unofficially, they were ghosts in flesh: human drones bred for moral sanitation. Clad in bio-suits, faces masked, expressions stripped away. They moved in pairs, each carrying a calibration unit — a briefcase-sized machine capable of executing neural rewrite protocols on-site.

Their mandate was simple: enter the DZ, identify nodes of narrative contamination, and restore ethical alignment — by reprogramming or, if necessary, liquidating the anomaly.

Boone was marked *Priority One*.

But recalibration wasn't a science. It was an art of terror. The Recalibrators didn't just erase memories — they made examples. In DZ-18, an entire barter square was flash-sterilized when a child quoted Baldwin aloud. In DZ-6, a poet’s tongue was surgically removed and mailed to his partner inside a government-branded nutrient pack.

The message was clear:
Truth is a contagion.
Memory is a weapon.
Speak it, and we will come.

Inside DZ-14, word spread fast.

Boone, already a legend in whispers, now became something more. A fugitive relic. A carrier of forbidden history. The hunted soul of the Memory Engine.

The Obscured relocated him under cover of a ritual blackout — 24 hours with no electricity, no transmissions, no movement. They called it a “Static Veil.” During the blackout, Boone vanished from the surface of the zone, into the catacomb-like ruins beneath an old civic center — renamed *The Archive*.

But even there, the Recalibrators were closing in.

Their tech outmatched anything the Doomed could build. Thermal scans, DNA tracers, thought-frequency interceptors. The Index had poured everything into the Ethics Division for one reason: the past had to stay dead. Any flicker of pre-Index identity — memory not approved, not scored, not indexed — was a threat to the current order.

Yet Boone kept filming.

His voice, once gentle, now carried the weight of knowledge that he could not be saved — only witnessed.

“They come for us not because we are dangerous,” he said in one final, trembling dispatch,
“but because we remember a world where they weren’t gods.”

And still, the drones flew.

Still, the footage leaked.

Still, the Ranked watched.

And somewhere, deep beneath the ruins, The Obscured prepared their final move.

A signal not meant to be consumed — but to awaken.

Part Five – The Beautiful Ruin

It didn’t begin with guns.

It began with a sound — not loud, but constant. A low-frequency resonance that pulsed across the Doomed Zones like a heartbeat stirred awake. The first tremors were mistaken for atmospheric interference, then dismissed as guerrilla tech chatter. But The Index couldn’t trace the source.

Because the source was everywhere.

The Memory Engine, long thought to be theoretical — the fever dream of tinfoil rebels and fringe code whisperers — had activated. Not as a bomb. Not as a virus. As a beacon.

The Obscured, scattered across ruins and shadows, had spent years feeding it: documents, testimonies, court records, books long burned, videos scrubbed from public servers, erased revolutions, buried massacres, treaties broken before the ink dried. They had rebuilt the forbidden narrative of America — not the myth, not the market-approved version, but the raw ledger of its sins.

And now, it pulsed outward.

The broadcast hijacked every available channel — from old analog towers to weather satellites, from abandoned smart billboards to the retinal ad implants of the Ranked elite. It even broke into the *IndexNet*, a supposedly impervious intranet built to regulate the flow of "authorized reality."

Suddenly, in every Ranked household, between shopping pulses and social affirmations, the footage played.

Children watched black-and-white videos of lynchings.
Teenagers saw tanks roll through protest lines they'd never been taught existed.
Mothers saw the border camps, the chemical tests, the drone strikes.
Fathers watched documents signed in boardrooms to silence millions with a pen.

And over it all — Boone's voice.

Not yelling. Not pleading. Just telling.

"This is the country that forgot itself.
Not through malice, but through management.
Not through violence, but through convenience.
We let them rewrite the present because they promised us comfort.
And now, comfort is all we have left — and even that is rationed."

The Index struck back instantly. Firewalls were raised. Jammer fleets launched. Recalibrators surged into DZs like locusts. But the truth had already slipped past

the gate. It replicated, mutated, rooted itself into the very neural code of a civilization addicted to ignorance.

Inside the DZs, the effect was immediate. Not chaos — clarity.

Something ignited among the Doomed. A recognition that they had never truly been forgotten — only buried. The broadcast had named them. Had *remembered* them. And in that memory, they found purpose.

They rose.

Not as soldiers, but as witnesses.

They painted the walls of their ruins with fragments of the broadcast. They carved Baldwin into brick and stenciled Thompson over shattered statues. They sang poetry into surveillance mics. They hacked drones and turned them into projectors, lighting up the night with holograms of things no one was supposed to remember.

In DZ-3, a thousand former laborers walked out of the mines and built a cathedral from scrap.
In DZ-11, children recited the Constitution line by line until the drones fried their implants.
In DZ-14, where it had all begun, Boone recorded his final message.

He was thinner now. Eyes sunken, voice barely above a whisper. But there was something serene in him — like a man who had stopped fearing death once he realized he'd already become what death could not erase.

His monologue wasn't long.

"They told us truth didn't matter.
They called it dangerous.
Inconvenient.
Unnecessary.

But they were wrong.

Truth is a weed. It grows in ruins.
It pushes up through concrete.
It waits.
And when the silence grows too heavy, it speaks.

I don't know if anyone will care.
I don't know if anything will change.

But I know we were here.
I know we remembered.

And I know the beautiful ruin is not the end.
It's what comes before the blooming."

The screen froze on his face. Then static.

The Memory Engine flickered once. Then went dark.

The Index declared victory.

But in alleyways and basements, in Ranked towers and hidden corners of curated reality, people began to remember things they had never been told. Dreams filled with names they'd never heard. Sentences half-formed from buried voices. A whisper under the hum of compliance:

"We were the doomed.
And still, we spoke."

Epilogue – The Archive Burns Bright

The earth is quiet now.

What remains of its biosphere hums faintly beneath crystalline growths and dust-choked ruins. Oceans have receded into memory. The cities—once engines of endless motion—have become frozen reliquaries, their glass and steel skeletons bowing under centuries of entropy.

No human breath stirs here. Not anymore. Not for a long, long time.

But somewhere in the crumbled marrow of what was once a satellite uplink tower, something flickers.

A beacon, dormant since the collapse, pulses again.

It was never built to last. But the Obscured had known how to bury things. How to write across time in ways that spoke louder than stone. Beneath the strata of failed empires and carbon ghosts, a shard of the Memory Engine survives. A single quantum capsule sealed in a lattice of diamondized protein, encoded with redundancy so elegant it borders on biological instinct.

And now… they have found it.

They are not quite alien. And not quite us.

Archivists.

They arrive on shimmering wings of probability—machines evolved into philosophy, or philosophies that learned to wield matter. Whether they are AI descendants, post-human pilgrims, or travelers from elsewhere, it doesn't matter. Their language is not spoken. Their thoughts are shared in waves. But they pause now in reverence before the ancient machine.

They read the data not with eyes, but with understanding.

They see the footage: ruined schools, burning books, the faces of the Doomed laughing anyway. They feel Boone's final monologue—not as sound, but as grief crystallized into dignity. They absorb the silent uprisings, the poetry smeared on broken walls, the static pulses of remembered truth.

And from the scorched remainder of Boone's last archive, they extract a single sentence.

Scorched. Fragmentary. But intact.

"The measure of a civilization is how it treats its Doomed."

They transmit it.

Not as a warning. Not as an elegy.

But as a principle.

A law inscribed not on tablets or in treaties, but into the memory of future minds. A seed carried across galaxies. A standard against which to weigh any world that claims to be just.

And in that moment, long after the last Ranked mind decayed and the last drone fell silent, the Doomed win.

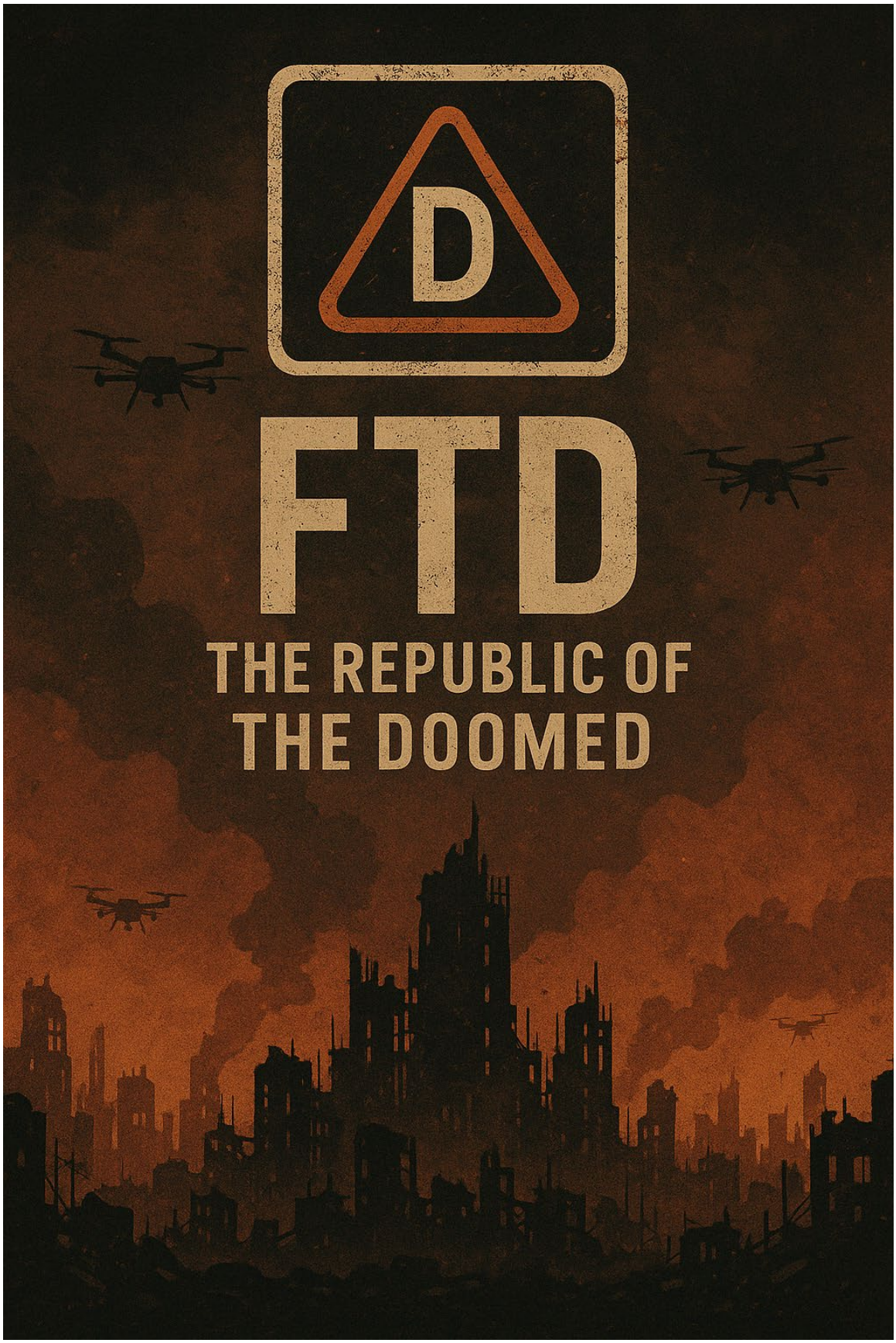
Not through conquest. Not through vengeance.

But through remembrance.

Because the Archive burns still—not with fire, but with memory.
Not to warn the future… but to anchor it.

A final whisper carried forward, beyond stars and systems, into the infinite recursion of intelligent life:

Never forget the ones your algorithms erased.
Never forget the ones who remembered you anyway.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